



Gc  
974.402  
W539hu  
1778962

M. L.

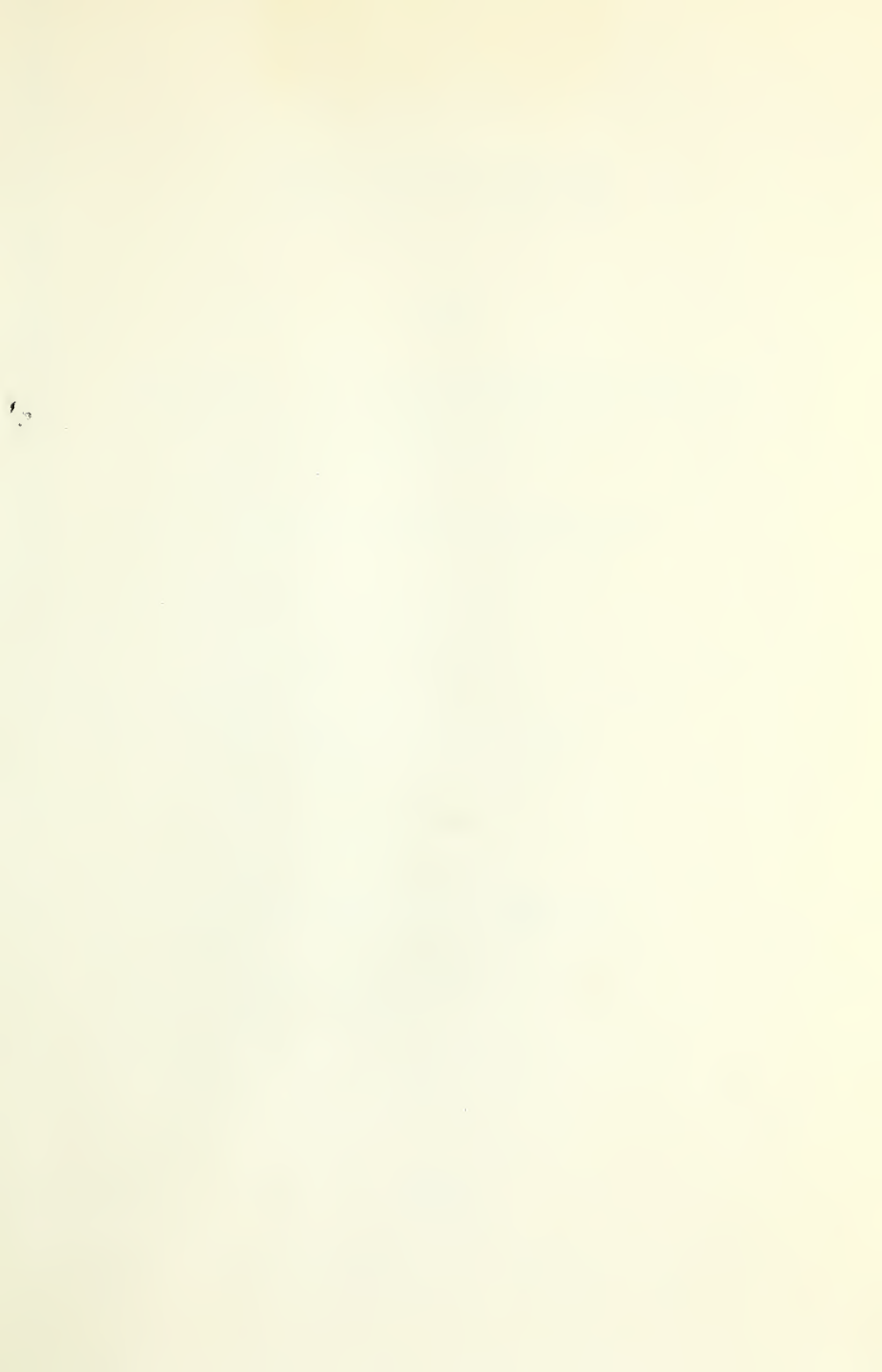
REYNOLDS HISTORICAL  
GENEALOGY COLLECTION

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1833 00084 6037







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015

<https://archive.org/details/historyoftownofw00huds>

A

# HISTORY

OF THE

TOWN OF WESTMINSTER,

Mass.

FROM ITS FIRST SETTLEMENT

TO THE

PRESENT TIME.

---

---

BY CHARLES HUDSON.

---

---

1832.

.....

G. W. STACY, PRINTER.....MENDON, MASS.





1778962

F

844967

.5

Hudson, Charles, 1795-1881.

A history of the town of Westminster, from its first settlement to the present time. By Charles Hudson. Mendon, Mass., G. W. Stacy, printer, 1832.

42 p. 25<sup>cm</sup>.

1. Westminster, Mass.—Hist.

68400

Library of Congress

68400 F74.W62H3

6-8171







## PREFACE.

---

History may with propriety be divided into *general* and *particular*. General history is the most interesting to the great mass of the people, but particular history is the most interesting to those who are in any way connected with the events recorded. There are but few events connected with the history of this town, which are of a public nature, or in which the community at large can feel a deep interest. Westminster is not associated with scenes of Indian butchery, nor has it been the birth-place or residence of men whom the country delighteth to honor—circumstances which give interest to the history of some other towns. If the following pages afford satisfaction to the inhabitants of the place, and furnish the writers of general history with any facts before unknown, the writer is rewarded for his labor. In collecting the materials for this sketch, the writer has spared no pains which could promise any degree of success. He has examined the records in the archives of the State, County, and Town, and also the papers of deceased individuals. He has also availed himself of all the information which the elderly inhabitants could impart; but tradition has been received with great scrupulosity. He has written to individuals at a distance who were supposed to be in possession of any facts touching the case. Each census is official, having been received from the Department of State at Washington, and the polls &c. of the valuation, from the Secretary of the Commonwealth. The estimates of manufactures have been taken from the manufacturers, and all the facts from the best of sources. Knowing by experience the interest that is sometimes felt in past events, and the difficulty of obtaining correct information concerning them, he has been somewhat particular in treating of the present state of the town, that those who come after us, may not lack information on this subject. That the perusal of these pages may be as pleasing to the reader, as the collection of the facts has been perplexing to him is the sincere desire of

THE AUTHOR.

Westminster Nov. 4, 1831.





## SITUATION AND EXTENT.

---

Westminster is a post town in the northerly part of Worcester County, situated on the range of high lands, which divide the waters that flow into the Merrimack River from those that flow into the Connecticut. It lies in latitude  $42^{\circ}, 32'$ , N. and in longitude  $5^{\circ}, 1'$ , E. from the meridian of Washington ;\* and is about 21 miles N. from Worcester, and about 50 miles W. N. W. from Boston. It is bounded northerly by Ashburnham, easterly by Fitchburg and a tract of unincorporated land, called Notown, southerly by Princeton and Hubbardston, and westerly by Hubbardston and Gardner. The township, as originally laid out, was supposed to contain 23,040 Acres, equal to a ~~content~~ six miles square ; but the measure was large, the tract containing 27 or 28000 Acres. More than 7000 Acres have been set off from the original township, and yet it is found by a recent survey, that the residue contains at least 20,000.†

---

\*The meridian of Washington is  $76^{\circ} 55' 30'' 54'''$  west of that of London or Greenwich.



†Mr. A. Moore, who has recently surveyed the town, has politely favored me with his *field book*, an abstract of which is here inserted. Beginning at the point where Gardner and Hubbardston corner on Westminster, the line runs as follows:

Course.			Distance.			Course.			Distance.			Course.			Distance.		
Ch.	L.		Ch.	L.		Ch.	L.		Ch.	L.		Ch.	L.		Ch.	L.	
S. 40°	E.	367	S. 73°	50' W.	13	69	S. 87°	30' W.	23	25	S. 38°	W.	40	00			
N. 52, 30 E.		250	S. 16, E.		6	13	S. 3, 30 E.		20	00	N. 42, 30 W.		4	25			
N. 10, E.		193	S. 74, 45 W.		40	00	S. 87, E.		4	75	S. 49, 30 E.		14	25			
S. 78, 30 E.		28	N. 16, 15 W.		7	75	S. 39, 20 W.		8	00	S. 39, 30 E.		7	0			
N. 10, E.		33	S. 74, 15 W.		13	75	Due South		14	00	S. 48, W.		28	50			
N. 74, 20 W.		2	S. 16, 45 E.		7	00	N. 89, W.		12	00	S. 39, E.		4	00			
N. 81, 20 W.		6	S. 74, 15 W.		68	50	S. 39, W.		5	00	S. 51, W.		47	42			
N. 56, 20 W.		8	N. 18, 45 W.		7	11	N. 2, 30 W.		4	00	S. 40, E.		25	00			
N. 68, 50 W.		2	S. 75, 45 W.		6	50	S. 85, 30 W.		19	36	S. 47, W.		30	00			
N. 67, 50 W.		12	N. 17, 15 E.		2	21	Due South		30	25	N. 40, W.		10	50			
N. 10, E.		398	N. 70, 30 W.		69	50	S. 40, W.		13	40	S. 39, W.		53	75			
S. 70, 30 W.		108	S. 19, 30 E.		40	00	S. 88, W.		6	50	N. 41, W.		9	75			
S. 14, 40 E.		15	S. 33, 30 W.		55	00	S. 1, W.		7	20	S. 47, W.		26	00			

The principal village in the town is situated on the turnpike or post road leading from Boston to Albany, through Brattleborough and Greenfield, and is 60 or 80 rods northwesterly from the Congregationalist Meeting House. It consists of 20 two-story dwelling houses, most of which are large and commodious, 4 English and West India Goods Stores, and several Mechanic's shops.





There is in the village a large public house with capacious out-buildings. The Meeting House, above mentioned, is situated on the summit of a large swell of land elevated considerably above the village, or "Street," as it is generally called. It stands a little north of the centre of a plat of land, appropriated by the original proprietors as a site for a Meeting House, a common, and training field. This green contains about six acres, and is nearly level. On its borders are several dwelling houses, one store, and an Academy recently erected. This hill, like most of the other elevations in town, commands an extensive and rather romantic prospect. A great variety of hills and dales is spread out before the eye of the beholder in nature's rudeness and beauty. On the one hand stands the Wachuset whose elevated head is "conspicuous far o'er all the hills around," and on the other at about twenty miles distant, the grand Monadnock, with brow half seen and half concealed in clouds, bounds the prospect of the beholder. And while these lofty elevations stand as watch-towers to the north and south, the eastern horizon is studded with the villages of Groton and Westford whose spires reflect the last beams of the setting sun.

### SOIL, SURFACE, &c.

Lying on a mountain range, Westminster is of course, an elevated township. The village is 1070 feet above tide water, and more than 900 feet above the mouth of Miller's river at Montague. The air is serene and healthy. Located in the neighborhood of Wachuset, the winters are more severe than in most towns of the same latitude. The snow generally falls earlier, and lies later in Westminster than in most of the adjoining towns. It frequently happens that the snow falls in this town to the



depth of six or eight inches, while at Fitchburg and Leominster, six or eight miles distant, the storm is rain, or snow so moist that it melts as it falls. Vegetation is at least a week earlier at Fitchburg and Leominster than it is in Westminster. The surface of the township is for the most part, rocky and uneven, but rising in large gradual swells, the soil is not generally broken. The Wachuset mountain in Princeton has the northern part of its base within the limits of Westminster. The soil is generally moist and strong, and, under a high state of cultivation, would be very productive. It is a good grazing township. The growth of wood is beech, maple, birch, oak, chesnut, ash, hemlock, and pine. Beech and rock maple, are the most abundant. From the latter, sugar for family consumption, is made in considerable quantities. White pine timber was formerly an article of considerable traffic from this town, but is now becoming scarce. White oak and walnut are rarely found among us.

### WATER AND WATER POWER.

This town furnishes a large quantity of water ; but being situated on the summit its streams are small. Westminster pond, lying about 70 rods southerly from the Congregationalist Meeting House, contains 160 or 170 acres, and has an outlet upon the southeast side. Wachuset pond, lying at the base of the mountain of the same name, and about 3 miles southeasterly from the centre of the town, is nearly as large as Westminster pond. The principal part of this collection of water is within the limits of Westminster ; the residue being in the town of Princeton. This pond has an outlet upon the northerly part. The streams from these ponds are of about the same magnitude, and, uniting in the easterly part of the town



about a mile and a half distant from their sources, form the largest and the most important stream that rises within the town. After the confluence of these brooks, the stream passes the Narrows, so called, about a mile and a half from the centre of the town, where it is made to contribute its power to the works of art. Here are four dams; one for a Saw Mill and Carding Machine, one for a Corn Mill and Turning Lathe, one for a Clothier's Works, and one for a Cotton Mill. These dams are all within the space of 100 rods upon the stream; and two intermediate privileges remain unoccupied.

The Narrows seem to be designed by nature for Mill seats. The water falls more than 90 feet in about 100 rods. There are below within the town, falls equally great, and privileges equally good. The high lands approach so near the stream as to render the expense of dams comparatively small. Stone for the construction of dams, foundation, &c, are also abundant on the margins of the stream. Nor are these privileges like many fancied mill seats, destitute of water. The stream though small is more permanent than brooks in general of its size. But the value of this stream lies in the vast reservoirs which can be formed above. The Westminster pond is already secured as a reservoir. This pond by actual and accurate admeasurement in 1825, was found to contain 152 A. 100 R. This survey was made when the water was unusually low. It is at present, capable of affording 4 or 5 feet of water, and with no very great expense might be made to afford 10 or 12. At the outlet of this pond there was formerly a Grist Mill, which in the wet season of the year, performed considerable business. The Saw Mill dam at the head of the Narrows, flows at present a large pond; and by raising that





dam 4 feet the large meadows above would be converted into a reservoir, and the Wachuset pond be made to reserve at least 20 inches of water for the dry season of the year. These ponds are not supported by small streams which vanish from before the summer sun ; but are supported by springs from the hills with which they are surrounded—springs which rise within the ponds themselves. Being thus supplied with water, these ponds are not subject to those fluctuations which characterize those ponds which depend on small rivulets for support.—But in addition to the supply from springs of which I have spoken, these ponds receive, in the spring and wet seasons of the year, large supplies of water from the circumjacent hills. These reservoirs would furnish the stream at the Narrows with water sufficient to carry a factory of almost any size, and would constitute one of the best privileges in this section of the county. But the Saw Mill dam, and the Westminster pond secured as it is, constitute the entire key of the stream, and whoever holds these can command in a great degree, the privileges below. From the Narrows this stream runs northeasterly into Fitchburg.

Tophet Swamp Brook rises in the westerly part of the town in the large swamp of that name, and running easterly passes within 100 rods of the village. Two Turning Lathes, three Saw Mills, and one Grist Mill are located on this stream. This brook furnishes a good supply of water for several months in the year. Let Tophet Swamp and the meadow east of the village be converted into reservoirs, and a good privilege would be created at Raymond's Saw Mill, and other places on the stream where the falls are good and the land favorable for the construction of dams.—While speaking of this stream, I will mention a curiosity connected with it. After pass-





ing Cooledge's Mill about 100 rods from the village, this brook divides into two nearly equal branches, which pass to the right and left of a large island, and unite again in the meadow three fourths of a mile below. This island contains about 100 acres, and its summit is elevated about 130 feet above the surface of the rivulet at its disjunction. One dwelling house is situated on the island. Nothing but the magnitude of the stream is wanting to make this a great curiosity.

A stream from Ashburnham and Gardner, passing thro' the northeasterly part of this town, affords several good mill seats. At Furbush's, a small village in the northerly section of the town, three miles from the centre, are a Grist Mill, Saw Mill and Turning Lathe. About a mile and a half below is another privilege (Brook's) on which are situated a Grist Mill, and Saw Mill. These occupy a place which nature seems to have designed for a mill seat. The fall is rapid, the high lands approach to the very brink of the river; and a mass of rocks presents itself across the entire bed of the stream as a foundation for a dam. Between the dams mentioned the water falls 60 feet. Another tolerably good privilege may be had below Brook's. This stream receives Beech Hill brook at Furbush's, and the stream from Tophet Swamp one mile below Brook's Mills. After receiving the last mentioned brook, this stream takes an easterly direction, and passes into Fitchburg, where it unites with the stream from Westminster and Wachusett ponds before spoken of. The privileges on this stream may be improved in some degree by reservoirs.—Phillips brook, which has its source in Watatic and East ponds in Ashburnham, flows through the north part of the town, receives several small streams and furnishes a site which is improved for a Saw and Grist



**Mill.** Having spoken somewhat particularly of Westminster and Wachuset ponds, we will give the two remaining ponds a passing notice. Mud pond is situated in the north part of the town, and contains something like 80 acres. It furnishes a very small stream of water which takes a westerly direction, and falls into the stream from Ashburnham and Gardner above the Mills at Furbush's. Grassy pond, situated in the easterly section of the township, contains about 30 acres, and furnishes a small stream which empties itself into the brook from Wachuset pond.

All the waters spoken of above, wind their way into Fitchburg, and uniting, form the North Branch of the Nashua. From the centre of Fitchburg this branch takes a southerly direction through Leominster to near the centre of Lancaster, where it receives the South Branch from West Boylston. After the confluence of these branches, the Nashua bends its course northerly and easterly, passes through a corner of Middlesex County, enters the State of New-Hampshire, and falls into the Merrimack near Nashua Village.

Otter River, which rises in the swamps in Hubbardston and empties into Miller's River, receives a considerable tributary stream from this town. This stream furnishes a good supply of water in the spring and fall months. The waters that rise in the southwesterly part of the town, unite and flow into Hubbardston, forming one of the principal branches of Ware River. This brook furnishes one small privilege in the town, which is occupied by a Saw Mill, where in the spring months there is no lack of water. The waters that run easterly and those that run westerly rise in some cases within a few feet of each other. Some trifling elevation in some instances divides the waters, and sends them in different directions to find their



kindred deep. Thus does the town of Westminster send its tributary waters into the Nashua, Ware, and Miller's Rivers. Standing on an eminence between them, she regards with impartiality the Connecticut and the Merimack, and liberally imparts her favors to the two principal rivers in the State.

## HISTORY.

The early history of Westminster is but little known. It was settled so recently that it was not a theatre of Indian massacre, and consequently the events of its early history are not recorded in the annals of aboriginal warfare; and at the same time so early that records were not kept with much correctness, and the actors in those scenes have passed off the stage. There are in fact no events of general interest connected with the history of this town.

The soldiers who served in the Naraganset war, having petitioned the Legislature for further remuneration, it was resolved in General Court, June 15, 1728,

"That Major Chandler, Mr. Edward Shove, Major Tileston, and Mr. John Hobson, be a Committee fully authorized and empowered to lay out two tracts of land for townships of the content of six miles square each, in some of the unappropriated land of this province; and that the said lands be granted and disposed of to the persons, whether officers or soldiers belonging to this province, who were in the service of their country in the Naraganset war, or to their lawful representatives, as a reward for their public service; and is in full satisfaction of the grant formerly made them by the Great and General Court, forasmuch as it is the full intent and purpose of this Court that every officer and soldier who served in said war, shall have a compensation made him over and above what wages and gratuities any of them have already received:

That public notice shall be given in the News Letters, and advertisements be posted up in every town in the province, notifying all persons that have served, and were in that fight, and the legal representatives of those deceased, that they give or send a list of their names and estates to this Court in their next fall session; and when such list is completed by a Committee then to be appointed by this Court, the grantees shall be obliged to assemble in as short a time as





they can conveniently, not exceeding four months, and proceed to the choice of a Committee to regulate each propriety, who shall pass such orders and rules as will effectually oblige them to settle sixty families at least, in each township, with a learned orthodox minister within the space of seven years from the date of the grant: *provided nevertheless*, if the said grantees shall not effectually settle said number of families in each township, and also lay out a lot for said settled minister, one for the ministry, and one for the schools in each of said townships, they shall have no advantage, but forfeit their said grants, any thing to the contrary herein contained notwithstanding."

At the next session of the General Court, Dec. 1728, the Committee by their chairman, Major John Chandler, submitted a "plan describing a tract of land containing 23,286 acres, 2 roods and 10 perches, without allowing for the pond, which is supposed to contain at least 246 acres, 2 roods and 10 perches. The residue (being 23,040 acres) is the content of six miles square, and laid out in as regular a figure as the land would admit of for one of the townships granted by the General Court, at their session held May 29, 1723, to the Naraganset soldiers; which land lies adjoining to the towns of Rutland and Lunenburg Additional Grant, and else where adjoins to province land." Upon this report it was resolved,

"That the land protracted and described in the within plan be and hereby is confirmed to the officers and soldiers who served in the Naraganset war."

The list of claimants increasing, the Legislature at its session in June, 1732 ordered that further townships be surveyed, so that 120 persons whose claim shall be allowed within four months, shall be entitled to a township six miles square, under the aforementioned regulations and restrictions. Though the tract which now constitutes the town of Westminster, was surveyed and by resolve granted to the Naraganset soldiers, in 1723, it was not legally granted and confirmed to a particular company till 1732. Then it was resolved that this grant should be-





long to 120 individuals on condition that they should settle sixty families in seven years; but this time was afterwards extended two years further.

A general meeting of the Naraganset grantees was held, by adjournment, on Boston common June 6, 1733. It was found that that the whole number of grantees amounted to 840, whereupon it was agreed, that they be divided into 7 separate societies or companies of 120 members each; this being the number fixed upon by the Legislature to receive a township. The Company which afterward drew the township north of Wachuset, was composed of 16 grantees from Cambridge, 23 from Charlestown, 26 from Watertown, 5 from Weston, 11 from Sudbury, 7 from Newton, 3 from Medford, 6 from Malden, and 10 from Reading. The residue were from a number of different towns. This Company organized itself by choosing John Cotting of Watertown, James Lowden of Charlestown, and Joseph Bowman of Lexington, a Committee to manage their affairs.

At a general meeting of the Naraganset grantees held at Boston, Oct, 17, of the same year, the townships were numbered; and No. 1, on Saco River was assigned to the Company from Ipswich and vicinity. After disposing of No. 1, they agreed to dispose of the rest by lot; but before casting lots; it was further agreed that the Company which should draw No. 2, near Wachuset, should assign 500 acres to His Excellency Gov. Belcher, for his honored father's right. On casting lots James Lowden for the Company from Cambridge &c. above described, received No. 2, north of Wachuset.

Thus far all the Naraganset grantees met and transacted their business in common. But having divided themselves into Companies, and assigned each its town-



ship, each Company transacted its own business in future without any reference to the others. The proprietors of Naraganset No. 2, (for this was the name by which this township was called, till it was incorporated in 1759) held their first meeting in Cambridge Dec. 3, 1733, and organized by choosing Joseph Bowman Moderator, and William Willis Clerk. At the same meeting they chose Joseph Bowman, John Cotting, and James Lowden, a Prudential Committee. Subsequently at an adjourned meeting Benjamin Brown, Wm. Brattle, Benjamin Pemberton, Edward Jackson, John Hall and Nathaniel Norcross, were added to the Standing Committee. At the first meeting they also made choice of a Committee to divide and lay out their lands. This meeting was adjourned to the 17th and then to the 24th of the same month. At these adjourned meetings, they agreed to lay out their lands in lots of 60 acres, and the Dividing Committee were authorized and empowered to add to this quantity where the soil was poor, so as to equalize as nearly as possible the value of the lots. They were further directed to omit all meadows and cedar swamps, if any there were. At the same meetings they authorized the Standing Committee to tax the shares, and to apply to the Legislature for any additional powers they might think necessary in the management of their affairs. The proprietors did not meet again till July.

In the interim, however, the Standing Committee held several meetings at Capt. Bunker's in Charlestown. At their meeting Dec. 28th, they directed the Dividing Committee to fix upon "a place for house lots, His Excellency's farm, and a proper place for a Meeting House; and then lay out land sufficient for a Meeting House, training field, and a burying ground, not exceeding ten



acres; then a lot for the first settled minister, a lot for the ministry, another for schools, and then lots for the proprietors." The place selected for the Meeting House is where the Congregationalist Meeting House now stands. The Governor's farm was located southeasterly from the Meeting House lot, and contained 500 acres and about 20 acres for roads. It included the land on which Capt Knowler, Mr. Sampson, Mr. Adams, Messrs. James, John, and Joseph Sawin, Mr. Aaron Darby, Mr. Elisha Wood, and Mr. Elias Holden, now reside. In fixing upon house lots, the Committee first laid out the townstreet where it now runs, and then layed out the lots in the form of a parallelogram, 160 rods by 60 with one end bounded by the street; this form was departed from, however, after the first range was located. At the same meeting the Standing Committee, foreseeing that the 7 years allowed to settle 60 families in the township, would expire before that number could be settled, agreed to petition the Legislature for an extension of the time. Application was accordingly made, and in April 1734, they obtained an act extending the time to June 1, 1741.

The Standing Committee met again Jan. 21, 1734. At that time no settlement was made, or house erected in the township. The Committee contracted with Edward Jackson of Newton and Zechariah Smith of Watertown for \$90 to "erect a house in the township, 22 feet long 16 feet wide, and 7 feet studs, to be built of square timber, framed roof, covered with long shingles, and having a good stone chimney." This dwelling was erected early in the season of that year, for at their meeting in July 1734, the proprietors voted "that the house erected





on lot No. 1, be for the use of the proprietors for 7 years, and after that shall belong to the person who shall own the lot." This was the first building erected in the township. It was built of square timbers laid one upon another after the manner of building log houses. It was situated a little west of the old Holden house, near the Baptist Meeting House. It was unoccupied except occasionally by Surveyors, Committees, &c. who visited the township, till 1737, when it became for a short time, the residence of Capt. Moore, the first settler in the town.

In July 1734, the proprietors met at Watertown, and voted that lot No. 3, be assigned for the first settled minister, and No. 95, be the ministerial lot. Having disposed of these lots, the proprietors then proceeded to draw their lands. These lots contained 60 acres, and were called *First Division Lots*. The rest of the land remained undivided, and was owned in common by all the proprietors.

Though the proprietors had several meetings, nothing of moment was transacted, till at their meeting in May, 1735, Major Wm. Brattle of Cambridge contracted with the proprietors to build a good Saw Mill in the township, and keep it in repair twenty years, in consideration of 12 acres of "meadow swamp," to be set off to him by the proprietors and the privilege of flowing all the meadows above his lot from the last of September to the tenth of April from year to year. This Mill was erected, and completed early in 1736. This was the second building erected within the town. It was located at the Narrows on the site now occupied by Wear's Saw Mill. The erection of this Mill must have exerted a very considerable influence upon the early settlement of the township,





as it afforded facilities for building, which were much wanted at that time in this dreary wilderness. As yet no settlement had been made. The proprietors were not very desirous of leaving the comforts of civilized life near the metropolis, and settling themselves in a wilderness, made vocal by the howling of wild beasts. At the same meeting the proprietors offered a bounty of \$40 each, to the first fifteen families which would settle in the township by the 30th of September 1736. This proving ineffectual, at their meeting in June, 1736, the proprietors offered a bounty of \$33 to each of the first 60 families which would settle in the township within two years. At the same meeting they levied a tax of \$16,67 upon each proprietor to encourage settlers. The bounty above mentioned was offered on condition that each settler should enter into bonds to clear, fence, and prepare for cultivation three acres of land, and erect a framed house 18 feet by 16, and continue in the place a certain length of time; each settler was required to settle on a separate lot. No settlement however, was effected till the next spring.

We now come to the most difficult part of our narrative. To fix the dates at which the different families came into the place, is no easy task. Some and perhaps most of the settlers, who had families, were in the place apart of one or two seasons, before they removed their families. If all the particulars were known, it would be difficult to say when certain persons became permanent inhabitants; and it is much more difficult now, when most of the facts are lost. Capt. Fairbanks Moore from Lancaster was the first who removed his family into the place. He came to Narraganset in March, 1737. He at first took up his abode in the house erected by the proprietors



on lot No. 1. This however was not the lot on which Mr. Moore settled. He simply took up his above in the proprietor's house, till he could erect a dwelling upon his own lot. In the course of the season Capt. Moore erected a framed house on his own farm. It was situated at the northeast end of the pond but a few feet distant from the house now occupied by Mr. James Heywood. Here, if we may believe tradition, the first birth and the first death occurred; both children of Capt. Moore. The dates of this birth and death, we have not been able to fix. Capt. Moore was an active and enterprising citizen. As early as 1740 or '41 he opened a public house, which was the first opened in the township. He was engaged in land speculation to a considerable extent, not only in Narraganset No. 2, but in the unsettled townships on Connecticut River. Tradition says, that he left this place, and went to Fort Dummer, now Brattleborough, Vt. where one of his sons had fixed his residence. and that he and his son were both massacred by the Indians who assaulted their dwelling in the night. What time he left Narraganset, we are unable to say; probably about 1746.\*

Deacon Joseph Holden was the second settler in the town. He came to the place in March of 1737, and commenced clearing his land. He soon returned to Watertown, and on the 13th of June, he left that

\* Stephen Greenleaf, Esq. of Brattleborough, Vt. in answer to a letter addressed to him on this subject, says, "In my earlier days, I lived two years on the farm then called, "Arms Meadows," where the remains of Fairbanks Moore he interred in the barn yard. I have in recollection what Col. John Sargeant (the first white person born in Vermont,) many times repeated in my hearing, that Fairbanks Moore was on a visit at his son's house (something more than two miles from the then Fort Dummer) that while he was there, the house was beset by Indians, and a bloody scene ensued; that Moore and his son fought bravely, were overpowered, and killed in the conflict, and eventually buried in said barn yard. The grave is monumented only with a solitary stone placed horizontally upon it, unhewn, and uninscribed, and is passed over as heedlessly by the trampling of feet, and the rolling of wheels as any other material in the cart's way."



place for the wilds of Narraganset. He arrived the next day at Lancaster, where he left his wife and his two young daughters, together with his son Abner, a lad of 14, while he and his son Joseph came on to the township, where they arrived June 15th. His son Stephen soon joined them, and they commenced erecting a house. We have already said that Capt. Moore erected his dwelling this season. The houses of Deacon Holden and of Capt. Moore were both raised the same day, and were the first framed houses in the place. Deacon Holden's house was situated on or near the spot where the old Holden House now stands, a few rods west of the Baptist Meeting-house. Having put his house in a comfortable situation, his wife and children came from Lancaster during the Autumn, and took up their abode in this howling wilderness. On this lot Deacon Holden resided till his death, which happened in 1768. During his 30 year's residence in this town Joseph Holden enjoyed the confidence and esteem of his fellow citizens. He was elected the first Deacon of the church, which was first collected, and filled various stations of honor and trust.

His son Abner, became one of the most popular and influential citizens in the town. Called early to public life, he became acquainted with public business, and for a long series of years, sustained some of the most important offices in the gift of his fellow citizens. He filled the office of District and Town Clerk, served in the capacity of Selectmen, and was for years the principal magistrate in the place. Some of these offices he sustained till the close of his life. He was a delegate to the Convention which formed our State Constitution in 1780, and the first Representative from the town after the adoption of that instrument. He was also in the Con-





vention in 1788 which ratified the Constitution of the United States. He possessed a good share of popular talent, and was long in public life. It was the fortune of Abner Holden, Esq. to witness all the difficulties and dangers through which the infant settlement had to pass, and to behold it at last permanently established enjoying peace and prosperity. \* He died Oct. 22, 1805, after residing in the township 68 years. Stephen Holden another son of Joseph Holden settled on the lot where Mrs. Cutler now resides. He came into the place in 1737, and died Sept. 15, 1794 in the 75th year of his age. Joseph the other son of Deacon Holden, died Sept. 14, 1774. Both Stephen and Joseph were called to serve their townsman in public stations. Deacon Holden's family consisted of himself and wife, three sons and two daughters; Capt. Moore's, of himself and wife, and six children. These two families consisting of fifteen persons, were the first to take up their residence in this desert. It is impossible for us to enter into the feelings which must have actuated the first settlers. The prospect of converting a wilderness into a fruitful field, and making the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose, must have cheered and gladdened their hearts. But on the other hand, dangers were to be encountered, and hardships endured. Exiled from the abodes of civilized men, they found themselves joint-tenants of the forest with savages and wild beasts. When the settlement was first commenced, there were no inhabitants within 12 or 15 miles. Rutland and Luningburg were the nearest settlements, but these were about 12 miles distant through a trackless desert. Lancaster though 15 or 16 miles distant, may be considered the nearest settlement. For it was through this place that all the early settlers came, and to Lancaster they





resorted for those necessities of life, which the wilderness did not afford them. One of the early settlers,\* thus describes the condition of the place and its first settlers.

“A Howling wilderness it was, where no man dwelt; the hideous yells of wolves, the shriek of owls, the gobbling of the turkeys, and the barking of foxes was all the music we enjoyed; no friend to visit, no soul in the surrounding towns, all a dreary waste exposed to a thousand difficulties.”

In addition to the hardships already mentioned the winter of 1738—9 was unusually severe, but less so than the winter which followed. The snow during both these winters was four feet deep for months. No winters during the last century, save the memorable winter of 1779—’80 can compare with them for depth of snow and severity of cold. Thus cut off from the Mill at Lancaster, to which place they usually carried their grain, the inhabitants were under the necessity of adopting the Indian custom of pounding their grain in a mortar. Bread prepared in this manner, and venison which the forest afforded, constituted their principal food during the inclement season, and of this the quantity was small, and the allowance scanty.

When the settlement was commenced by Moore and Holden, there was not even a “marked road” to the township. The first families wound their way from Lancaster through the trackless desert to Narraganset No 2. But in November of that year, the proprietors at their meeting in Cambridge, chose a Committee of which Joseph Holden was one, “to look out and mark a road from Lancaster, to Narraganset No. 2, and through said township to the Meeting-house lot; said road to be layed out and mended, where it will best accommodate the

\* Abner Holden, Esq.



whole town." This road was located over Gerry Hill in Sterling, and continued to be the main, travelled road to Boston for a great number of years. At the same meeting it was agreed that a Meeting-house should be commenced the next season.

In 1738 Phillip Bemas from Cambridge removed his family into the township. He was the third settler in the plantation. He located himself on the farm now improved by Mr. Farnsworth, and erected a house on the site now occupied by Mr. Farnsworth's old house. His family consisted of 6 or 7 persons, among whom was an infant about two years old by the name of Munjoy who is still living at the advanced age of about 95 years. Thomas Bemas of Cambridge followed his brother Phillip, the same season. His family consisted only of himself and wife. He fixed his dwelling on or near the spot where Mr. Asaph Wood now resides. Anna Bemas their first child was born, April 22, 1741. Tradition says she was the first *female* child born in No. 2. She married Mr. John Estabrook at the early age of fifteen, reared a numerous family, and is still living in the town in the 91st year of her age.

During the same year the proprietors were taking measures to settle the township. At their meeting in Jan. 1738, they agreed to divide their meadow lands, which were omitted in the first division. The proprietor met again in September.

At this time four families had settled on the plantation, and building the Meeting-house would naturally call people to the place. To meet their wants and to induce others to people this forest, the proprietors at this meeting granted \$100 for the support of the gospel in the township. In December of the same year another \$100



was added ; and the sum of \$200 a year was continued until a clergyman was settled in the township.

June 6, 1739, the proprietors met for the first time in the township. The Meeting-house being completed the outside, it was on that day publicly dedicated. The Sermon was preached by Rev. Isaac Richardson then of Woburn, from Haggai 2: 9. This house was 45 feet long and 35 feet wide, with 20 feet posts, and was situated a few feet in front of the present Congregationalist Meeting-house. It remained there till the new house was erected in 1788, when it was disposed of, and converted into a barn. The frame is still standing, and constitutes the barn on Mr. Abraham Wood's place. In 1740 Thomas Stearns removed to No. 2, from the town of Watertown. His family consisted only of himself and wife. He fixed his residence at or near the spot, where Mr. Job Seaver now resides. Mr. Stearns was one of the Deacons of the church for a number of years, and was frequently called upon to serve his fellow citizens in the various offices in the town. He died April 29, 1785 in the 74th year of his age.

The proprietors at their meeting in September, 1740, granted \$33, to make and mend the roads in the township. At the same meeting they contracted with Mr. Seth Walker to build a Grist Mill. This Mill was located at the out-let of Westminster pond, where Mr. Walker then resided. The subject of a Corn Mill had been agitated by the proprietors for two or three years, but not until this time, were any effectual measures adopted, to create this necessary appendage of every settlement. This Mill was erected the following year, and was of course the first building of the kind ever erected in the township. The erection of this Mill would naturally





prove an inducement to settlers to locate themselves in the place.

Capt. Daniel Hoar may be considered the next settler. We find him in the township as early as 1739, employed on a Committee to provide for building a Grist Mill. But it was not until the latter end of the next year, or the commencement of 1741, that he became a permanent resident in No. 2. He first commenced on a lot in the southerly part of the town, and built him a cabin on the margin of Beaver Swamp, so called, about 100 rods southerly of the present residence of Mr. Jonas Miller. But being dissatisfied with his situation, he left that lot, and commenced permanently on the lot on which Hayward's Tavern house now stands. He commenced on the north-westerly part of the lot, and fixed his residence on the rise of land 60 or 80 rods southwesterly from the residence the widow of the late John Bigelow. Here he resided till his death, which happened Dec. 4, 1782. He was a native of Concord, Mass. from which place he removed with his wife to Narraganset No. 2. As he was one of the first settlers, so he became one of the first citizens in the town; and enjoyed for a long period the esteem and confidence of his townsmen, which was demonstrated by the frequent suffrages he received for places of honor and trust.

Seth Walker became an inhabitant of the place in 1741. He had been in the township the preceding year, and had contracted with the proprietors to erect a Mill of which we have before spoken. Mr. Walker's dwelling was near the present residence of Mr. Aaron Savin. From what town Mr. Walker came, and to what place he removed, is uncertain. About 1749 or '50, we find Andrew Darby from Acton settled in the town on the place where Mr. Walker



formerly resided. It is probable that he left the place about that time.

If we place Dea. Joseph Miller next in order of time, it cannot be far from the truth. In 1740 he purchased his land, and the same year we find him in the township, employed on a committee to lay out and mend the roads. He probably removed his family to Narragansett the latter part of the next year. He came from Newton, and erected his house a little in the rear of the present residence of Mr. Jonas Miller, his great grandson. His family consisted of himself, wife, and an infant child. Dea. Miller, enjoyed the confidence of his townsmen, and had many testimonials of their attachment. He was one of the first Deacons of the church, and from time to time filled all the principal offices in the gift of his fellow citizens. While under the propriety, he was not overlooked, and after the place was incorporated, he became one of the leading men, and his papers, many of which are preserved to this day, show that he did business carefully and correctly. In the days of revolutionary excitement, he was elected to represent the town in the General Court, and was one of the delegates from Westminster to the Convention in 1780, which framed our State Constitution. He died May 24, 1794, in the 77th year of his age.

Joseph Lynde from Malden, was another of the early settlers. He came to the place about 1741, and fixed his residence about 100 rods from the Common. The remains of the cellar are still to be seen on the north side of the road, half way from the Meeting House to the residence of Mr. Horatio Eagar.

Benjamin Garfield from Waltham, came to No. 2, in 1741, and commenced on the lot now occupied by Mr. Levi Graves. He cleared the lands in some degree



and erected a house and barn. In January 1743, he sold his lot with the buildings thereon to Richard Graves, then of Sudbury. Mr Graves removed to the township in the spring of that year, and was of course one of the early settlers of the town. He became a man of some note among them. He died March 14, 1798, in the 90th year of his age. Mr. Garfield did not continue long in the place.

We cannot arrange the families in the precise order in which they settled, but will observe that method as far as it is practicable. June 9, 1742. Eleazer Bigelow removed his family to No. 2, and settled on the lot where the widow of the late John Bigelow resides. His house was on the upper part of his lot 60 or 70 rods westerly from Mrs. Bigelow's present residence. His family consisted of himself, a wife, 4 sons, and 3 daughters. Joshua his aged father, was also in his family. Joshua Bigelow, was in the Narraganset war in person, and was the only individual who served in that war, that ever settled on the plantation. Joshua Bigelow, Died Feb. 21, 1745, aged about 90, and is said to have been the first adult person that died in the township. Eleazer died Feb. 24, 1762, in the 57th year of his age.

In 1741 or 2, Samuel Whitney from Weston, removed to this place, and located himself near the present residence of Mr. Hartwell. This house was a few rods south of Mr. Hartwell's, the cellar of which is still visible. His wife constituted his only family when he removed into the township. Mr. Whitney was frequently called to serve his townsmen in public stations. He died Jan. 1, 1784.

About the same time, John Hadley, came to Narraganset, and settled on lot No. 5. His house was situated a





little north of Mr. Esty's barn. Wm. Baldwin settled on lot No. 14. His residence was a few rods south of Mr. Horatio Eagar's. David Dunster from Cambridge, and Samuel Smith, settled about the same time. Of the four last mentioned settlers, but little can be learned. Shortly after, Daniel Walker of Sudbury, became a settler, and fixed his residence where Mr. Ashael Seaver now resides. Joseph Hørsley was in the place early, but was rather a sojourner or speculator, than a settler. Isaac Stedman, was also in the town at an early period.

The seven years allowed in the grant for settling sixty families expired June 1, 1741, when not one sixth of that number were settled. The proprietors fearing that they should be deprived of the grant, met at Cambridge on the day following, and levied a tax of \$33 upon each share to enable them to offer a generous bounty to settlers. At this meeting they raised the bounty to \$98,34, and allowed the same to those who had already settled. This bounty was at first offered to those who should settle in one year, but the same reward was extended for ten years. The settlers on the 4th of August, made choice of Mr. Elisha Marsh, for their minister. This choice was concurred in by the proprietors at their meeting in September of the same year. They also fixed his salary at \$150, in addition to the land to which he was entitled by the grant. On the 20th of October 1742, Rev. Mr. Marsh was publicly ordained to the work of the ministry in this place.

From the first settlement of the township some fears were apprehended from the Indians, who in small numbers were found occasionally lurking about the place. But it was not till 1742 or '3, that they gave the settlers much uneasiness. Instigated by the French in Canada, these



children of the forest began to assume a hostile attitude. About 1743,\* the General Court granted \$1300 to enable the settlers to erect such fortifications as would secure them against the savages. Ten forts were accordingly erected. These were placed around the dwellings in different parts of the town. They were constructed of wood, and encircled the dwellings at the distance of 10 or 20 feet on all sides. Some of them were constructed of large square timbers laid one upon another, and locked together at the angles, after the manner of a log house, and others were built with stockades, that is, with timbers or slabs standing perpendicular, with one end planted or driven into the earth. These fortifications were distributed about the town as follows: One enclosing Capt. Hoar's dwelling, one at the house of Rev. Mr. Marsh, which was a few rods easterly from the present dwelling of Rev. Mr. Mann, one at Dea. Holden's, one at Richard Graves', one at Seth Walker's one at Dea. Miller's one at Dea. Stearns', one at Phillip Bemas', one at the place where Mr. Wiswall now resides, then owned by Samuel Hagar, and occupied by a tenant by the name of Flagg, and one at the house of Joseph Gibbs, who removed early into town, from Sudbury, and located himself in the southeasterly part of the town, about half a mile easterly of the house now owned and occupied by Mr. Timothy Hoar. Besides these there were a few temporary forts in other places, some to guard their buildings, and others for the protection of laborers when at work far from their homes.

A few soldiers were sent by the government, and a part of the inhabitants were put under pay as a town scout. A sentinel was posted at each fort in the night

\* The records of the General Court from 1743 to '46 having been destroyed by fire, the precise time of this grant cannot be ascertained.



time, and the soldiers alternately patrolled the township by day, whenever the enemy were supposed to be lurking within their borders. From 1744 to 1749, the settlers experienced many discouragements. The savages were frequently found lurking about in the woods. At night the families repaired to the garrisons for safety, leaving their own dwellings to the mercy of the savage foe. By day the laborers repaired to their fields with their muskets, to guard themselves against their insidious foe who might ambush their path. It is impossible for us to enter fully into the feelings of the inhabitants thus circumstanced. If immediate destruction, or what is worse, a death by torture, or a protracted captivity, did not take place, it was constantly haunting their imaginations. Painful indeed must be the situation, where the labourer is liable to be captured in his field, and his family massacred and scalped in his absence, and where the hours of darkness and repose may invite the foe, and his slumbers may be broken by the sound of the war-hoop, and the darkness of night be dispelled by the blaze of his cottage.

But although the savages gave the settlers much anxiety, no one ever fell a prey to the merciless enemy, nor were any battles fought between them. The only well authenticated incident that has come to my knowledge occurred in 1748 or '9. Wm. Bowman from Lexington, who had been in the township 5 or 6 years, and who garrisoned, if not resided with Capt. Hoar, was mowing one day in his field near the present residence of Mr. George Miles, when he discovered some Indians in the adjoining woods. They had placed themselves in such a position as to cut him off from the fort, and no doubt felt sure of their victim. Bowman very adroitly concealed his agitation of mind, and as though he had made no discovery of the en-





emy, kept at work but moving at the same time in a direction from the fort and his insidious enemy until he gained the declivity of the hill, when he dropped his scythe, and made for Graves' Fort, with such speed as to elude the grasp of his fleet-footed pursuers. When he arrived at Graves' Fort, an alarm was fired, which, being answered through the settlement, called every man to his post. The alarm being given, messengers were despatched, which brought troops from Lancaster and Rutland. The savages finding that they were discovered, and that preparation was making to give them a warm reception, quietly left the place, and so permitted the troops to return to their quarters, and the citizens to their employment. Bowman soon after this occurrence left the place, having no desire to continue his hand with adversaries trained to every art of guile, and every method of cruelty and torture. This was one of the last incursions of the savages. A treaty of peace between France and England, gave rest to this infant settlement. And though the war was renewed in 1754, there was but little apprehension from the savages in this last war.

From 1743 to 1749, the settlement went on slowly. Though a bounty of about \$100 was offered by the proprietors, only 19 families had settled at the beginning of 1750, and of these most had settled before 1743. There were but few who settled, while apprehensions were entertained from the Indians. In 1745 or '6, Joshua Child from Waltham, came to the place, and located himself on the farm where Capt. Harrington now resides.

In 1750, the meetings of the proprietors were transferred to the township, where they were ever after held. At the first meeting Andrew Darby, then of the place, was chosen Proprietor's Clerk, which office he filled for



years. The halcyon days of peace gave a new spring to their affairs, and the settlement went on with considerable rapidity. But in 1756 an epidemic prevailed in the place, and proved fatal particularly among children. Nothing of moment occurred till 1759, when the inhabitants applied to the Legislature for an Act of Incorporation.\* On the 10th of October 1759, Narraganset No. 2, was incorporated into a district by the name of Westminster. At the first meeting of the inhabitants of Westminster, Joseph Miller, Daniel Hoar, Andrew Darby, Richard Graves, and Samuel Whitney, were chosen Selectmen. In 1764 the *scarlatina* or canker-rash, prevailed to an alarming degree, and was generally fatal, particularly among children. Almost every family was called to mourning. Mr. Isaac Stedman buried 3 children, Capt. Nathan Whitney 4, Mr. Stephen Calf 4, Mr. James Walker 2. Other cases of a similar nature occurred, but these are some of the most striking. This sickness and that which prevailed in 1756, were the most alarming of any that have ever afflicted the place. Nothing of importance occurred while the place remained a district. We will notice a few things however, as they serve to

\* As the names of the petitioners will show who the inhabitants of the town were at that time, I here insert them.

Abner Holden*	Joseph Holden	William Edgell*
John Wheeler	Thomas Stearns*	Richard Graves
John Brooks	David Bemas	Joshua Bigelow
Richard Baker*	Joseph Miller	Josiah Jackson
Daniel Walker*	James Taylor	John Woodward*
Nathan Whitney*	Samuel Whitney	Josiah Cutting*
Jonas Whitney*	Andrew Darby	Jonas Winship*
Nathan Poore	Elijah Gibbs	Ebenezer Taylor
Seth Harrington*	Nathan Wood*	Nathaniel Wheeler
James Cohee	John Stearns	Benjamin Horsley
John Rand*	Joseph Holden, jr.	

\* As the names of the individuals who were selected to fill the first jury-box, will serve to acquaint the reader with the leading inhabitants of the place in 1760, we will insert them. The petitioners above whose names are marked with an asterisk, and the following persons composed the first Jury: Thomas Conant, Nicholas Dike, James Walker, Reuben Miles, John Miles, Noah Miles, Phillip Bemas, Benjamin Butterfield, Stephen Holden, Elisha Bigelow, John Brooks, William Bemas, John Estabrook.





show the spirit of the times, and the manners of the people. In 1765, a Committee was raised to "dignify and seat the Meeting-house, according to the real and personal estates; and having reference to age and honor." At their March Meeting in 1768, a Resolve was passed unanimously, which does honor to their memories—a Resolve which might with propriety be re-resolved in these days of idleness and extravagance. We will give it verbatim.

"The District of Westminster, taking into consideration the sinking state of the province, arising through the manifold extravagances of the inhabitants; in the great neglect of industry, and the still greater increase of our misery in the extravagant expense of its inhabitants, in the purchase of superfluities, and are fully sensible of the absolute necessity of industry and frugality in order to save us from impending woe, to save our wealth, and to place us in a state of independency; do cheerfully and unanimously vote and resolve, that from and after the first day of April next, we will not purchase any superfluities, and that we will take every proper method within our power to encourage industry and manufactory within this District; for we are fully sensible that idleness has a natural tendency to impoverish any community, and when attended with extravagancy, brings immediate ruin, will therefore by all possible and lawful means, take every method within our power to encourage industry among ourselves, and take this opportunity to give it in direction to our Selectmen, to take special care that all idle persons amongst us be kept to some lawful business, and that the laws of the Province in that regard be duly observed."

The District of Westminster was incorporated into a town, April 24, 1770. Soon after this Act of Incorporation, the subject of resisting the encroachments of Great Britain, became the absorbing theme. Westminster took a deep interest in the contest. February 11, 1773, they passed a resolve in town-meeting, approving of the opposition made by the citizens of Boston, to the unjust requisitions of the crown. December, 1774, they passed a vote forbidding the Constables to pay the money collected on the Province tax to the Treasurer appointed by the Governor, and directing





them to pay it to the Treasurer appointed by the people. In 1774 the inhabitants voted that they would support their proportion of the poor that should leave Boston in consequence of its occupation by the enemy. At a town meeting June 10, 1776, it was voted unanimously, that if Congress would declare the Colonies independant, they would support them with their lives and fortunes.

Such was the spirit which actuated the inhabitants of Westminster during that eventful struggle. It may appear small for a town like Westminster at that period, or even at the present, to pass resolves on subjects of a national character; but it was in fact these little republics, that procured the Declaration of Independence; without such pledges as were given by this and other towns, Congress would not and ought not to have taken the bold and decided stand they did. In a government like ours, every expression of opinion has its influence, and is felt by the rulers of the State and Nation. During that war, Abner Holden, Nathan Wood, and Joseph Miller, represented the town in the General Court, and in the Congress that convened within the state to deliberate upon the affairs of the nation.

June 17, 1785, a track of land consisting of seven or eight thousand acres was set off from Westminster, to form a part of a new town by the name of Gardner. In 1786, a vote was obtained in town meeting to build a new Meeting House. This house was finished in 1788; and was dedicated Jan 1, 1789. From the erection of the meeting house to the present day nothing of importance has occurred but what is embraced in the other departments of this history. We will close this department of our history by remarking that the manners and customs of the inhabitants have improved very considera-



bly for the last 50 years. Low revelry is rarely found amongst us, and litigation is much less frequent than it was formerly.

## ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

We have already seen that as early as September 1738, the proprietors appropriated \$100 for the support of the gospel in the township, and that on the 20th of October 1742. Rev. Elisha Marsh was settled over the people in the place. At what time the church was organized we are not able to learn with certainty. One of the first settlers,\* in a record of his family, with which we have been favored says "After the ordination of Mr. Marsh, the church proceeded to organize itself, and chose Joseph Holden first and Joseph Miller second deacon, who served in their offices till death put an end to their services." From this it would seem probable that the church was organized immediately after the ordination, of this however we are certain; three years after that period the church was in being. Soon after the settlement of Mr. Marsh, unhappy difficulties arose between him and his people, which terminated in his dismissal, Marsh 4, 1757. After he was dismissed from his pastoral office, he remained in the place for some time, and filled some of the secular offices in the District. He at length removed into Cheshire County, New Hampshire, and became Judge of the Court of Common Pleas. After the dismissal of Mr. Marsh in 1757, the church and society were in a broken state for six or eight years. They had preaching however, some part of the time. In 1760 the society gave Mr. Samuel Dix a call to become their pastor, but he declining, a call was subsequently given to Messrs. Peter T.

\* Abner Holden, Esq,



Smith, Samuel French, Samuel Cotton, and John Wythe. At length July 19, 1765. Mr Asaph Rice received a call which he accepted. On the 16 of October, of the same year he was publicly ordained over the church of Christ in Westminster. The Sermon on the occasion was preached by the Rev. Eli Forbes Pastor of the second church in Brookfield, from 1 Cor. 2; 2. The Rev. Mr. Rice was a native of Westborough. Before his settlement in this place, he had spent about two years on a mission among the Indians at the Oneida Plantations on the Susquehanna. During Mr. Rice's ministry, he had the misfortune to loose his right hand. After this he wrote with his left, and some specimens of his penmanship show that he acquired considerable skill in writing in that manner. He continued his relation to the church and Society till the close of his life. He died March 31, 1816, in the 83d year of his age, and the 51st of his ministry. About two years before the close of his life, Mr. Rice had a paralytic shock, which put an end to his public labors, and on Feb. 22, 1815, Rev. Cyrus Mann was ordained Colleague Pastor with Rev. Mr. Rice. The Sermon on the occasion was preached by Rev. Elisha Rockwood of Westborough, from Heb. 13: 17. Mr. Mann continues in the pastoral care of the Congregational Church and Society in the town. Of his Meeting House we have before spoken. It was dedicated Jan. 1, 1789. It is a commodious House 60 feet by 45 with a gallery and steeple. The number of male members over 21 years of age belonging to this society is 133.

The people in Westminster were united in one religious society, till about 1812. At that time a number of individuals mostly from the northerly part of the town, uniting with their brethren in Ashburnham, formed a





Methodist Society. They have a Meeting House 40 feet by 36, without galleries. This house stands within the town of Westminster, though it is near the line of Ashburnham. Being Episcopal in their Church Government, their desk is supplied by such preachers as the Conference from time to time place upon the Circuit. The number of male members from Westminster of 21 years of age belonging to this Society, is about 25 or 30.

There is also a Society of Universal Restorationists in this town. This society was first formed March 4, 1816, and incorporated Feb. 7, 1820. Their Meeting House is situated about a mile and a half northerly from the village. It stands on a rise of land, and commands a good prospect, though there are but few houses in its immediate vicinity. It is a two story house 50 feet by 40 with a projection and steeple, and was dedicated July 3, 1821, Sermon by Rev. Edward Turner of Charlestown, from Ps. 86 ; 9. Their first settled minister, Rev. Levi Briggs was installed Sept. 3, 1822, Sermon by Rev. Paul Dean of Boston. The church was organized June 15, 1822. Mr. Briggs' time having expired, Rev. Charles Hudson took the pastoral care of this Church and Society in April, 1824. In April 1825, he removed to the place, where he now resides, and continues his relation to his people. The number of male members of 21 years of age belonging to this society is 163, 13 of whom belong to the neighbouring towns.

The Baptist Society was formed in 1827. In 1829 they erected a brick Meeting House 50 feet by 40. It is a two story house, handsomely situated about 80 rods easterly from the Congregationalist Meeting House. Their house was dedicated and Rev. Appleton Morse, ordained over this Society and the Princeton Society, Oct. 20,



1830, Sermon by Rev. Ira Chase of Newton. The Church was organized March 31, 1830. Mr. Morse leaving the Society to supply them constantly at Princeton, Rev. Amasa Sanderson is about removing to the place to take the pastoral Charge of this Society. Their Meeting House is secured to the Baptists forever by a Trust Deed, and all the Pew owners hold said pews on this condition that "The Church reserve the right of calling, settling, continuing, and dismissing the minister." The number of male members, of 21 years of age belonging to this society is about 35.

## SCHOOLS.

In the first settlement of this town, schools were very much neglected, as is generally the case in new townships. It is probable that something was done by private individuals at an earlier period, but the first appropriation we find on record, is one of \$20 in 1759. Two years afterwards the grant was raised to \$26, and in 1763, to \$44. This money was expended in what was called a moving school, which was kept at private houses in different parts of the settlement. In 1765 or '6, the District was fined for not supporting schools according to the requisition of the law. This acting as a stimulous, in 1767 the inhabitants erected a school house 20 feet square, and appropriated \$100 for the support of schools. This school house was situated on the common near where the old school house now stands. The same year the District voted to support a school four months in the centre of the town. In 1771, \$180 were appropriated for the support of schools, and in the year following a vote was obtained to build four additional school houses. In 1777, it was voted that the five schools be kept ten weeks each during the year. From this view of the subject, we are enabled



to judge of the opportunities which our fathers enjoyed for acquiring an education. The difficulties attendant upon the first settlement, and the burdens of the revolutionary war prevented that attention to education which would otherwise have been given it.

After the close of the war, the cause of education received more attention, and from that period to this, our schools have been improving. At the present day we have ten school districts, each of which has a School House. The sum annually appropriated for schools is about \$700, and the number of scholars who attend school is about 600. Our schools are kept about 120 weeks by female teachers, and about 90 by male teachers, making 210 weeks schooling in each year. In addition to our public schools we have generally had private schools to the amount of three or four months in a year. In 1829 a building 38 feet by 28, was erected for an Academy. It is two stories high, and is situated on the declivity of the Meeting House hill 50 or 60 rods from the village. This school has been in operation, about 18 months, and has been as well sustained as Academies in general, having an average number of 35 or 40 scholars. This school is at present under the care of Wm. C. Jackson, A. B. a graduate from Dartmouth.

## **AGRICULTURAL AND MANUFACTURAL PRODUCTS.**

The natural productions of Westminster are of course, similar to those in the neighbouring towns, and will need no description. I have introduced them here to remark upon the quantity rather than the articles themselves. Take all the products of agriculture in the town, and they will hardly meet the consumption. In the article of bread-stuff, the consumption is decidedly greater than the pro-





duction of the town; beef, pork and butter, are the leading articles that are sent to market, and of these the quantity is not large. The soil being rather cold, grain can be raised in the towns above and below us cheaper than in Westminster. Nothing but improving her water power, or establishing other manufacturing business will enable this town to maintain her standing among her sister towns. The manufacture of chairs and cooper ware which is now carried on, must eventually be abandoned for want of timber. Let the manufacture of woollen and cotton goods, of combs, cards, shoes &c. be introduced, and it would give a spring to agriculture, and increase the wealth and population of the place. With these remarks we will proceed to notice the manufacturing business of the town.

In the most common sense of the term, Westminster is not a manufacturing town. We have had for years past only one small factory of about 5 or 6 hundred spindles. This is being repaired and enlarged. Though we have a sufficiency of water power it has not to any extent been occupied. Our manufacturing is of a different character, and at the head of this class must be placed an article which does honor to female industry. The manufacture of straw braid, and straw bonnets is here carried on to a considerable extent. This article is manufactured to the amount of 18 or 20 thousand dollars annually and during the past year has considerably exceeded that sum. Giving this pre-eminence to female industry, we will proceed to the next article in magnitude viz. *Chairs.* The manufacture of chairs has increased with considerable rapidity within two or three years. There has been manufactured during the past year 26,000 chairs, worth at the shops \$11,000. Cooper ware or the manufacture of tubs, pails, &c. for the last year has



amounted to between 6 and 7 thousand dollars. This business has rather diminished for the last five years. Window blinds and sashes, card boards, and boxes for hats, candles &c. are manufactured annually to the amount of \$2500. Bass and other vials, and oil clothes, are manufactured in town to a small extent. Our mechanics perform the business of the town, and something more. Painting, of all kinds, including portrait painting, is here carried on to some extent.

## POPULATION AND OTHER STATISTICS.

Though we have no exact dates from which to estimate the population, till 1790, when the first census was taken, we are in possession of facts which will enable us to approximate very near to the true number. In 1740, we may safely estimate the settled population at 25. In 1750 we find by the records that only 19 families had settled agreeable to the vote of the proprietors; tho' 2 or 3 other families were in town. The large bounty held out to settlers would induce them to divide into as many families as possible. Both the proprietors and settlers had a great inducement to multiply the families to the greatest extent. Under all circumstances it is not probable that they would average more than four persons to a family. Add to these families, that of Mr. Marsh, and the population would be on this calculation, 95 in 1760. The inhabitants in their petition to the Legislature, presented in the summer of 1759, say, they have nearly sixty families. Admit that the sixty families were settled by 1760 which cannot be far from the truth, and that these families would average five persons to a family, and the population in 1760, would be 300. In 1786, the number of polls was 241, and if the polls bore the same proportion to the population, that they did in 1790, the population



in 1776 would be 912. In 1785 the polls amounted to 271, which in the same proportion would make the population in that year 1092. When we arrive at 1790, we have the official census to govern us, and having each census from that time to the present, we can give a connected view of the population to the present day. The periods at which we have the data to form these estimates, do not fall upon every decennial year, but instituting a proportion we can easily divide it into equal periods of ten years each. This we will do in the following table.

Year.	Population.	} Not Official.	Year.	Population.	} Official.
1740.	25.		1790.	1176.	
1750.	95.		1800.	1368.	
1760.	300.		1810.	1419.	
1770.	683.		1820.	1634.	
1780.	992.		1830.	1695.	

Such has been the population of this town during the different periods of its history.\*

\*That the census in all its details may be seen, I insert in this note each census as it was taken.

1790 under 16 years. 16 and upwards.

Males	277.	310.	=	587.	} Blacks	1172.	} 1176.
Females	585.			585.		4.	

1800 under 10. | 10 to 16. | 16 to 26. | 26 to 45. | 45 and upwards.

Males	209.	98.	120.	124.	118 = 669.	} 1368.
Females	205.	116.	131.	121.	126 = 699.	

1810 under 10. | 10 to 16. | 16 to 26. | 26 to 45. | 45 and upwards.

Males	236.	103.	129.	122.	126 = 707.	} Blacks 1	} 1419
Females	217.	95.	129.	136.	134 = 711.		

1820 under 10. | 10 to 16. | 16 to 26. | 26 to 45. | 45 and upwards.

Males	229.	140.	154.	140.	149 = 812.	} 1634.
Females	223.	137.	151.	164.	147 = 822.	

1830	under 5.	5 to 10.	10 to 15.	15 to 20.	20 to 30.	30 to 40.	40 to 50.	50 to 60.	60 to 70.	70 to 80.	80 to 90.	90 to 100.	
Males	117.	104.	112.	89.	135.	83.	67.	58.	33.	23.	3.	3 =	832.
Feml's	115.	94.	93.	97.	156.	96.	61.	56.	36.	21.	13.	0 =	858.
												Blacks	5.

1695





Having stated the number of inhabitants, we will state the number of polls and dwelling houses as far back as they can be obtained officially.

In 1785 the	No. of Polls was	271	No. of Dwelling Houses	153
1791	"	"	318	"
1801	"	"	334	"
1811	"	"	384	"
2821	"	"	421	"
1831	"	"	433	"

Believing that a more particular representation of the present state of the town will be pleasing, if not useful at some future period, we will present a more circumstantial view of the town as taken from the valuation the present year. The State valuation as settled in the year 1831 is \$208,908,107,54. Of this the County of Worcester is estimated at \$21,166,640,68, and the town of Westminster, at \$339,006,00. Westminster will pay \$1,85 on every \$1000 state tax. The number of Polls which are taxed are 378, not taxed 53, paupers 3, number of houses, 257, of barns 253, of oxen 330, of cows 800, of horses 228, of young cattle 533, of sheep 846, of swine 302, of acres of land 19024 1-2, of Saw Mills 8, of Grist Mills 5, of factories 1, of Carding Machines 1, of Clothiers Works 1, of Turning Lathes 5, of Taneries, 3 of Stores 6.

There are in the town 2 public houses, 3 Social Libraries, a Lyceum, 2 Physicians,\* and 1 Attorney.†

\*John White, Flavel Cutting, †Simeon Sanderson Esq.

---

ERRATA.—In table on page 4, first column distance, for 393 read 389. Second column distance, for 6 13 read 6 16. Page 12, eleventh line, for Dec. 1728 read Dec. 18th. 1723. Last paragraph page 12, 3d line, for "so that 120 persons," read "so that every 120 persons." Page 13, twelfth line, for 16 grantees read 17.

F  
844  
967  
5











